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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION N
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EXAMINER

FOREMAN, JONATHAN M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3736

DATE MAILED: 10/01/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/938,533

Applicant(s)

MULLER ET AL.

Examiner

Jonathan ML Foreman

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
 - If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
 - Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 July 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-22 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 8, 9, 12-18 and 20 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-7, 10, 11, 19, 21 and 22 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 6/2/04 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. Claims 1 – 7, 19, 21 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,325,755 to Bushek et al.

In reference to claims 1 – 7, 19, 21 and 22, Bushek et al. discloses a partially implantable hearing system (Figures 6 and 7) comprising an electromechanical output transducer (162) selected from the group consisting of electromagnetic, electrodynamic, magnetostrictive, dielectric and piezoelectric transducers (Col. 8, lines 40 – 43); a micromanipulator (147, 149, 150) attached to a cranial vault (Col. 10, lines 56 – 57) for rotationally and axially positioning the transducer and for fixing the transducer in a set position (Col. 12, line 66 – Col. 13, line 13); a releasable coupling unit disposed between the transducer and the micromanipulator (Col. 11, lines 36 – 65; Col. 12, lines 22 –

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25). The releasable coupling comprises a transducer-side coupling element (168, 165) and a micromanipulator-side coupling element (135, 139) being adapted to selectively engage each other and disengage from each other. The micromanipulator-side coupling element receives the transducer-side coupling element (Col. 11, lines 38 – 41). At least one of the coupling elements is partially made of an elastic, soft polymeric material (Col 13, lines 13 – 29). The transducer-side coupling element is shown to be rotationally symmetrical. In a released state, the transducer can be removed from the micromanipulator while maintaining the set position. Furthermore, it is well established that a recitation with respect to the manner in which an apparatus is intended to be employed, i.e., a functional limitation, does not impose any structural limitation upon the claimed apparatus which differentiates it from a prior art reference disclosing the structural limitations of the claim. *In re Pearson*, 494 F.2d 1399, 181 USPQ 641 (CCPA 1974); *In re Casey*, 370 F.2d 576, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967); *In re Otto*, 312 F.2d 937, 136 USPQ 458 (CCPA 1963). Where the prior art reference is inherently capable of performing the function described in a functional limitation, such functional limitation does not define the claimed apparatus over such prior art reference, regardless of whether the prior art reference explicitly discusses such capacity for performing the recited function. *In re Ludtke*, 441 F.2d 660, 169 USPQ 563 (CCPA 1971).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

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5. Claims 10 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,325,755 to Bushek et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,935,170 to Hakansson et al.

In reference to claims 10 and 11, Bushek et al. discloses a releasable coupling unit, but fails to disclose the releasable coupling being a snap-in coupling. Hakansson et al. discloses a partially implanted hearing aid (Col. 1, lines 6 – 13) wherein the releasable coupling affixed to the cranial vault is a snap-in coupling having a rigid annular receiving member, and the coupling element associated with the hearing aid is made partially elastic and adapted to snap into the rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction (Figure 2; Col. 3, lines 18 – 22). It would have been obvious to replace the releasable coupling unit as disclosed by Bushek et al. to comprise a rigid annular receiving member, and a partially elastic member adapted to snap into the rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction as taught by Hakansson et al. in order to provide a releasable coupling unit that prevents the need for large connection and disconnection forces (Col. 1, lines 30 – 50).

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed 6/2/04 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant has asserted that the support assembly as disclosed by Bushek et al. cannot be considered a micromanipulator. However, the Examiner disagrees. Bushek et al. discloses the support assembly having a structure capable of allowing the position of the transducer to be changed after the support assembly has been fixedly attached to the cranial vault (Col. 3, lines 22 – 31 and 45 – 51; Col. 12, line 66 – Col. 13, line 13). The Examiner maintains that the support assembly as disclosed by Bushek et al. is properly construed as a micromanipulator.

Conclusion

7. All claims are drawn to the same invention claimed in the application prior to the entry of the submission under 37 CFR 1.114 and could have been finally rejected on the grounds and art of record in the next Office action if they had been entered in the application prior to entry under 37 CFR 1.114. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL** even though it is a first action after the filing of a request for continued examination and the submission under 37 CFR 1.114. See MPEP § 706.07(b). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jonathan ML Foreman whose telephone number is (703) 305-5390. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 4:30 pm.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Max Hindenburg can be reached on (703)308-3130. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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JMLF


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